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COMPARATIVE MUNICIPAL STATISTICS.

The second session of the Fifty-fifth Congress authorized the Department of Labor to prepare annually a compilation of the official statistics of all cities in the United States with over thirty thousand population. Provision is thus made for a comprehensive presentation of comparative municipal statistics, the value and importance of which need not be emphasized to those interested in the problems of municipal government. The only previous attempts at any comparative statement of municipal statistics in the United States have been in the decennial censuses in the volumes on Wealth, Debt, and Taxation, and on Social Statistics of Cities. But these, apart from their inadequacy in appearing only after ten-year intervals, have been so defective — especially in their methods of classification and arrangement — as to have little real value. A well-weighed criticism of these census statistics has been recently made by Professor H. B. Gardner in his paper on “Municipal Statistics in the Twelfth Census,” read at the New Haven meeting of the American Economic Association, and to be published in vol. xii. of the monographs of the association.

In other countries the importance of municipal government and the value of comparative statistics of their operations have been more fully recognized, and in several countries special publications on municipal statistics are regularly prepared. It may be of interest at this time to call attention to some of the most important of these compilations, and to note how far they are successful in presenting the information most wanted.

The question of comparative finance statistics of municipalities formed a subject of discussion at several sessions of the International Congress of Statistics, as a result of which it was determined in 1878 to establish an annual bulletin of the finances of the largest cities of the world. The preparation of this was placed in charge of M. Josef Körösi, director

of the Statistical Bureau of Budapest; and the first *Bulletin Annuel des Finances des Grandes Villes*, containing statistics for the year 1877, appeared in 1879. The list of questions for this had been sent to some fifty cities of continental Europe, but complete answers were received from only fourteen. The tables showed for these fourteen cities the total receipts and expenditures, the detail of receipts from principal sources, the detail of expenditures for the most important branches of administration — as police, street-cleaning, education —, the value of municipal property, and the extent of their indebtedness. Figures were given showing both the total amounts for each city and also per capita. The cities were arranged in the tables in the order of population. The bulletin, containing the tables with explanatory notes, formed a pamphlet of forty pages.

Other issues of the bulletin on the same general plan were published annually for eight years, the fifth number including also synoptical tables for the quinquennial period. Twenty-six cities were represented in the second issue; but there was little further increase, the highest number included in any one year being twenty-eight. With the exceptions of Washington, D.C., and Providence, R.I., which appeared in some of the later bulletins, only cities of continental Europe were represented in the tables. The British towns were intentionally omitted on account of the important differences in their administrative system from that on the Continent.

After the number published in 1889 (containing statistics for the year 1884), the bulletin was discontinued on account of the insurmountable difficulties in the way of securing the data from a sufficient number of cities. No subsequent attempt has yet been made to secure a permanent international comparison of municipal statistics. More successful, however, have been the comparative statistics for cities within particular countries, this success being due in part to the greater influence of governmental over private action, and in part to the larger degree of uniformity in administrative systems among the cities of each particular country.

Both the French and Italian governments publish annually

statements of the finances of communes, and summaries of these showing totals appear in the statistical abstracts for these countries. The summary in the French *Annuaire Statistique* gives only the aggregate receipts and expenditures for all the communes in each department, with similar aggregate figures, but no figures for any particular city, as to the amount of *centimes additionels* and the receipts from *octrois*. The summary in the *Annuario Statistico Italiano* gives only aggregates for the entire kingdom; but, in addition to the totals of receipts and expenditures, gives itemized aggregates according to a careful classification of receipts and expenditures. Thus the total expenditures for all Italian communes for general administration, for public works, for education, and the like, are given.

The facts for particular Italian cities are to be found in the *Bilanci Comunali*, published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce. The first number appeared in 1863, and, with few exceptions, it has been issued each year since that time, though with some changes in the system of classification. As now presented, there are ninety items of receipts, grouped together under ten main heads, and one hundred and seventy items of expenditure, grouped under eight main heads. The large number of items of expenditure is caused by the triplication of each item under each of the three divisions of obligatory, *facoltative*, and extraordinary expenditures. In accordance with this elaborate scheme the figures are given for all of the communes in each compartment, and also for the chief town in each province. The latter include all of the considerable towns in Italy, and there are thus presented for the comparative study of the municipal finances of these towns both detailed statistical data and the totals for the main heads of receipts and expenditures.

The arrangement and grouping of the figures can, however, be criticised. The towns are arranged in alphabetical order by provinces, with the aggregate figures for each province in alternate columns with the figures for the chief towns. Thus adjacent figures in the tables are not at all those likely to be compared, as would be the case were the statistics for the

large towns grouped in one separate series of tables having the towns arranged in the order of their population. Another disadvantage is the absence of any per capita figures or of any statement of municipal indebtedness. It is also clear that the value of the compilation would be much increased, were it to include, in addition to finance statistics, the most important facts of municipal equipment and the results accomplished by the various municipal departments. These would make clear how far differences in expenditure in different cities were justified by the different scope of work undertaken.

The *Local Taxation Returns*, prepared by the English Local Government Board, present a mass of information concerning the financial operations of the local authorities in England even more complete than that presented in the Italian *Bilanci Comunali* and the French *Situation Financière des Communes*. Such financial statements for the English Poor Law authorities have been prepared and published annually since the establishment of the Poor Law Board in 1834; but it is only since the creation of the Local Government Board in 1871 that returns from all the various local authorities have been collated.

The English local government system presents, in its confusing chaos of authorities, a striking contrast to the simple and machine-like administrative system in France and Italy. This confusion of authorities necessarily affects seriously the character of the financial statements. In consequence, the statistics of municipal finance cannot be found in one series of tables. Poor relief and public schools form distinct series of tables, and are entirely excluded from the municipal accounts; while the latter are not presented as a whole, but are sharply divided into borough accounts and urban sanitary district accounts. The county boroughs have still another division, known as the Exchequer contribution accounts. In addition there are in many towns special authorities dealing with specific municipal functions,—burial boards, baths commissioners, library trustees, market commissioners, bridge and ferry trustees, joint boards,—and the accounts of these are also distinct and independent of the municipal accounts.

This situation makes impossible the presentation of any figures showing the total municipal receipts and expenditures for particular towns; and, in fact, no attempt is made in this direction. But complete details as to receipts and expenditures for all the manifold fields of local governmental activity are presented, in which the ordinary financial operations are carefully distinguished from accounts dealing with loans and investments of capital. The arrangement of the large towns into three groups — county boroughs, municipal boroughs, and urban districts not boroughs — is an important step in the direction of a scientific classification; but within each of these divisions the arrangement is geographical. No per capita figures are given, nor are the financial statistics supplemented by other information concerning the operations of the various authorities.

In addition to the detailed figures for the many local authorities, tables of aggregates for the entire kingdom are appended. These show the total receipts and total expenditures by each class of local authority, the total receipts by all authorities from each of the principal sources of revenue, and the total outgo by all authorities for each of the important departments of expenditure. These, again, are differentiated into ordinary operations and those arising out of loan transactions.

Much the best collection of municipal statistics is presented in the *Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutscher Städte*. This was first published in 1890, and has been continued at almost yearly intervals since, the last number appearing in 1897. It is prepared, not by the central government, but through the collaboration of statistical officers in the large cities, under the general editorship of M. Neefe, the director of the statistical bureau of Breslau. The *Jahrbuch* is composed of a large number of chapters, each dealing with a special field of municipal activity. Thus there are chapters on fire protection, street cleaning, street lighting, parks, charities, water-works, baths, savings-banks, education, libraries, taxation, and other municipal functions. There are also chapters giving general information about city conditions, such as those

on local transportation, trade, shipping, post and telegraph business, population, dwellings, and even the classification of population by occupations and by incomes. The first volume contained seventeen chapters; but additions have been made in each number, so that, although every subject is not treated in each number,* the sixth volume has thirty different chapters.

Each chapter is prepared by one of the collaborating editors, who frames the tabulation schemes and collects the information from the various cities. The tables thus prepared, of which there are several on each subject, contain detailed information on the equipment of the various departments, of the amount of work actually accomplished, and of the financial conditions. Thus in the chapter on water-works there are tables giving the length of water mains (distinguishing the supply and the distributing pipes), the number of houses connected and the number not connected with the water pipes, the total water supply and its distribution for public services, municipal buildings, and private undertakings. Additional tables show the financial operations of the water-works,—the receipts from different sources, the expenditures for administration, maintenance, additions, interest, and amortisation of debt, with net results, distinguishing those for the complete transactions from those for ordinary operation. Everywhere, too, totals are supplemented by per capita and comparative figures. The other chapters present no less complete and interesting information concerning the subjects with which they deal.

The *Statistisches Jahrbuch* deals only with the cities of over fifty thousand population. The earlier volumes arranged the cities in order of population; but in the last number this has been changed to an alphabetical arrangement, which necessarily separates from each other the figures which are most likely to be compared. The single criticism which can be made on the work is the absence of any summary tables of receipts and expenditure. It is, of course, true that totals

* Thus the subjects of Markets and Police have each been treated in but a single number. In the case of police this is probably due to the fact that in most of the larger cities the police force is not under the municipal government, but is managed directly by the central government.

of this kind are based on such different conditions in the various cities as to be unsafe for general comparisons; but it would be of advantage to indicate the total receipts and expenditures for the sake of completeness in the information for each city and for use in comparing development from year to year.

The *Oesterreichisches Städtebuch* (prepared by the Austrian Statistical Central Commission), the seventh volume of which appeared in 1897, presents just such a series of summary financial tables for fifty of the largest cities in the Austrian monarchy, arranging the cities in order of population. These summary tables, moreover, include not only statistics for the single year, but tables are given for each year of the preceding decade, thus making possible a rapid comparison of the development of municipal finances within that period.

In all other respects, however, the *Oesterreichisches Städtebuch* is distinctly inferior to the *Statistisches Jahrbuch Deutscher Städte*. Although the detailed figures deal only with twenty-two cities compared with fifty-five in the German work, it forms a much larger volume (700 pages as against 388); but there are no real comparisons of the various lines of municipal action. In place of chapters on the various municipal functions there are sections on each of the cities, each section being subdivided into various divisions. If the information for each city was complete, this method of arrangement would make the volume of little more use than a series of municipal documents for each city bound together in one volume. The student of comparisons must search through the volume for the facts of interest to him, and prepare his own tables from such figures as he may find. Further, the report for each city by no means gives such complete and detailed information as to all the various municipal functions as do the chapters in the German year-book. Population details (including the movement of population), educational statistics, figures of food consumption, and summary financial statements, are given for each city at length. In a few cases some other matters are included, such as poor relief and public lighting; but these are exceptional, and there is no attempt

to make the information for any city cover all the undertakings of the municipality.

The Bureau of Industries under the Ontario Department of Agriculture publishes annually a report on municipal statistics for the Province of Ontario. This gives the statistics of assessment and taxation (showing also per capita taxation), of receipts and expenditures, and of assets and liabilities. The municipalities are classified as counties, townships, towns, villages, and cities; and figures are given both for the separate municipalities and aggregates for each class. The classification of receipts and expenditures is not well adapted for comparative purposes. Several departments are often combined in one item—such as water-works and fire protection—a system which makes impossible a comparison of either of the factors thus united. Receipts from loans and payments for construction works are given separately in the tables; but they are included in the single set of totals for each municipality, so that it is not possible to compare the total ordinary expenditure of different cities.

Criticise as we may these foreign publications, we must not forget the fact that in every case mentioned the problem has been attacked with an appreciation of its importance, and that what has been done is far ahead of anything thus far accomplished in the United States. It is from a study of the results accomplished in other countries and by the adaptation of what is best in all that the Department of Labor may hope to prepare valuable information for the cities of the United States.

JOHN ARCHIBALD FAIRLIE.

MESSERS. MACMILLAN announce for early publication the third and concluding volume of the *Dictionary of Political Economy*, edited by Mr. R. H. I. Palgrave. The successful completion of this large undertaking earns for the editor the gratitude of students of economics the world over.

THE house of F. Alcan, Paris, has published during the quarter an important contribution to the history of thought on philosophy and economics in the volume of letters exchanged between John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte.

THE census office, concerning whose newly defined duties and organization Commissioner Carroll D. Wright gives information in another column, will have at its head, as director, Mr. W. C. Merriam, some time governor of Minnesota. The assistant director is Dr. F. H. Wines, who certainly fills the requirement made in the census act,—that he shall be “an experienced practical statistician.” The act provides also for “five chief statisticians, who shall be persons of known and tried experience in statistical work.” The appointees to these responsible positions, so far as announced, are Mr. W. C. Hunt, who will have charge of population statistics; Mr. W. A. King, for vital statistics; Mr. L. G. Powers, for agriculture; and Professor W. F. Willcox, of Cornell University, who will take part in general administration and supervision. Of these, Messrs. King and Hunt have already had valuable experience with preceding federal census enumerations, Mr. Powers has done excellent statistical work as labor commissioner in Minnesota, and Professor Willcox has an established reputation as a writer on statistical subjects. The appointments give the best promise of thorough work.

The whole subject of the scope and method of the census is discussed in the newly-issued publication of the American Economic Association on *The Federal Census*, a collection of

critical essays on the several phases of the enumeration, prepared by highly competent hands, and invaluable for all who would use the census material of the past, or may have to do with the collection of such material in the future. The volume is the result of the active work of a committee of the Association, of which Professor Richmond Mayo-Smith was chairman; and it has been edited by another member of the committee, Professor Willcox.

Another valuable addition to the literature on the census is in preparation, and nearly completed, in the shape of an exhaustive memoir on *The History and Growth of the Federal Census*, by Messrs. Carroll D. Wright and W. C. Hunt. It is expected that, with the sanction of Congress, the memoir will be published during the coming winter.

The *Fifth Annual Abstract of the Labor Statistics of the United Kingdom*, bearing the belated date of February, 1899, brings new evidence of the rare combination of scientific ingenuity and tact which enables the Commissioner for Labor to present this annual summary of a vast mass of heterogeneous details with the clearness and skill that make a public document appeal both to the trained student and to the ordinary citizen. Hitherto the *Abstract* has appeared in the late autumn, and has contained no information less than about ten months old. This further delay in publication is, therefore, in part, a useful innovation, inasmuch as it has made possible the addition of statistics for 1898 in the case of forty-two of the tables relating to current conditions of labor and employment.

Unfortunately, the tables devoted to workmen's organizations—trade-unions, co-operative societies, and friendly societies—give scarcely any information later than 1897; but they offer interesting statistical comparisons for a considerable series of previous years. It appears from these statistics that the total number of trade-unions in the United Kingdom rose steadily from 1,203 in 1892 to a maximum of 1,308 in 1896, and declined again to 1,287 in 1897. The total membership of these unions, on the other hand, steadily declined from

1,500,451 in 1892 to 1,404,898 in 1895, then suddenly rose in 1896 to 1,491,007, and in 1897 to 1,609,909.

Detailed analysis of one hundred principal unions, with a membership of 1,059,609 in 1897, shows during this period corresponding changes in financial strength, indicated by the fact that the funds in hand rose to considerably more than £2 per head at the end of the years 1896 and 1897. The lowest annual expenditure per member of these one hundred unions since 1892 was 25s. 8d. in 1896; the highest, 40s. 7½d. in 1893, the amount in 1897 being 35s. 4½d. The largest single item of expenditure is that of unemployed, travelling, and emigration benefits, which declined to the exceptionally low figure of 5s. 11d. in 1896, and rose again in 1897 to 10s. 2¾d.,—a more normal figure for the period in question. Dispute benefit is second in size and importance, and necessarily varies much from year to year. During this period dispute benefit was heaviest in 1893 and 1897,—12s. 2d. and 8s. 2½d. per member, respectively. It was lightest in 1896,—3s. 2½d. Sick and accident benefits represented an expenditure of 5s. 1d. in 1897, oscillating about this sum for the whole period with remarkably little variation. Superannuation benefit, on the other hand, has crept up steadily from 2s. 3¾d. per member in 1892 to 2s. 11½d. in 1896, and 2s. 10½d. in 1897. Funeral benefit in 1897 called for an expenditure of 1s. 6½d. per member; and this, again, shows almost no variation from year to year. Miscellaneous “other benefits and grants to members” vary largely from a minimum of less than a shilling per member in 1895 to 2s. 11½d. in 1894. Finally, “working and other expenses” show an almost constant charge, closely approximating 5s. 6d., and reaching a maximum of 5s. 9¼d. in 1897. Such statistics sufficiently attest the strength and vitality of the trade-union movement.